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ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography provides a list of books appropriate for preschoolers that help teachers develop class routines and expectations. Two topics have emerged from this review: classroom and school activities and first school experiences, including feelings. This has helped provide a way to organize books and will hopefully help teachers select books for specific purposes. Books were considered on three criteria: emphasis on pre-kindergarten; accessibility to limited- English-proficient students; and multicultural perspective. The list also attempts to balance old favorites and new friends. Because there are more books on this topic than there is time or space to annotate, only some are described in detail while for others just the bibliographic information is provided. All listed books are recommended. (Author/KFT)

Children's Literature for Pre-K
Theme: Hooray for Pre-K (September)

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 August, 2000
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Description: an orientation to pre-kindergarten, the development of class routines and expectations, and an introduction to all centers

Two topics have emerged from this review of many books about school for early childhood education: books about classroom and school activities; and books about first school experiences, including feelings. This has helped provide a way to organize the books and hopefully will also help teachers easily select books for specific purposes. In choosing among the multitude of books on this topic, I have concentrated on three criteria: emphasis on pre-kindergarten; accessibility to limited English proficient students; and multicultural perspective. The list also attempts to balance old favorites and new friends. Because there are more books on this topic than time or space to annotate, I have described some and have provided just the bibliographic information for others, but I have read and can recommend all the books on the list. Enjoy and happy reading!

Classroom Activities and School Routines for Pre-K and Early Childhood

1. Baer, Edith. (1990). This is the Way we Go to School. A Book about Children Around the World. Illustrated by Steve Bjorkman. New York: Scholastic.

The first page reads, "One by one or two by two—Come along, it's fun to do!" And so it is! This is a single narrative poem in a picture book format, appropriate for beginning ESL students. It has limited enough text with detailed illustrations to be accessible to even new beginners in the first month, yet it also appeals to a wider audience. Its transportation vocabulary, rhyming words, and social studies concepts also make it appropriate for native speakers and intermediate and advanced ESL learners. In addition, by depicting 23 different ways children from around the world go to school, this book subtly affirms the backgrounds of a diverse student population. In sum, this is a fun, multicultural book with numerous teaching connections that integrate language arts and social studies.

2. Burningham, John. (1975). The School. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell (Harper & Row).

This small book succinctly describes, in words and pictures, the basic activities of early childhood education, from pre-kindergarten through first grade. Its 27 words are spread across nine pages. Facing each page of brief text is a colorful illustration explaining the activity. This is

a perfect for introducing young beginning language learners to basic school vocabulary. Following the read-aloud session, encourage the students to make their own book about school by drawing pictures of the activities they like to do. This gives them further opportunity to talk about this vocabulary. This has continued to be a very useful little book over the past 25 years. Other books by this author include The Baby, The Rabbit, and The Snow.

3. Crews, Donald. (1984). School Bus. New York: Greenwillow Books (William Morrow).

Multiple pictures of the ubiquitous yellow and black school buses attractively fill this book. Its large, clear illustrations are helpfully matched with simple text and useful phrases. The students are multi-aged and multihued, reflecting a culturally diverse school population. Riding the school bus begins in pre-kindergarten and this book is one of the best, and certainly most age appropriate, introductions to this part of the school experience.

4. Lankford, Mary D. (1992). Hopscotch Around the World. Illustrated by Karen Milone. New York: Beech Tree Books (William Morrow).

This book describes and illustrates 19 different ways to play the international childhood and school yard game of hopscotch. Versions are included from 16 different countries, including El Salvador, India, and Nigeria and three versions from within the U.S. The step-by-step directions are meant for the teachers, but the facing pages intrigue children with illustrations that capture the cultures and demonstrate the game. This book offers a fun way to integrate language, culture, and physical activity. Go and try the different versions with the children. See which ones your students like! For a multicultural perspective on other childhood games, see Jacks Around the World and Dominoes Around the World, by the same author.

5. Mitchell, Donald. (1997). Schools Around the World. Austin, TX: Steck-Vaughn.

In simple sentences, one per page, this book describes distinctive aspects of schooling for young children in different parts of the world. The countries are Peru, China, Japan, Nepal, Kenya, Indonesia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Germany, Honduras, and the United States. This is part of the Steck Vaughn "Pair-It Books" Series at the Emergent State 2 level, and it is matched with another of their books about school, Benny's School Trip. Although attractive, useful, and multicultural, be aware that this book is part of a reading series which is written specifically for school use. It is not an independent trade book that can be generally found in a library or book store. To build an appreciation of quality children's literature, it is best to balance these two kinds of books.

6. Morris, Ann. (1999). Teamwork. Illustrated by Ken Heyman. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.

Through photographs and simple text, this book looks at different kinds of teamwork around the world. This teaches an important lesson of pre-kindergarten: how to work cooperatively in a group. This book also brings a multicultural perspective to the idea of teamwork. See also Work (1998) by Morris, which shows people all over the world at work. After all, school is work for children, and teachers too.

7. Rockwell, Harlow. (1976). My Nursery School. New York: Greenwillow Books (William Morrow).

In this early childhood classic, Rockwell clearly and simply describes a preschool classroom and its various activities and centers. Multiculturalism is given a nod through the different skin colors of the children, although there are not many distinctive cultural features. Diversity is also represented through a male teacher. However, the strength of this book is its focused orientation to pre-kindergarten. See the other monthly booklists for other books by Rockwell on diverse early childhood topics.

8. Rockwell, Anne. (1997). Show & Tell Day. Illustrated by Lizzy Rockwell. New York: HarperCollins Publisher.

The culturally diverse children in this early childhood classroom get to share something special on Thursdays, the “show and tell” day. The author uses this activity to feature the customs of some of the children’s cultures, e.g., Japanese origami, Russian wooden dolls, and Spanish maracas. This attractively illustrated book combines an orientation to a typical early childhood activity with a multicultural perspective. Another special combination in this book is the mother-daughter pairing—Mom, Anne, is the author and her daughter, Lizzy, is the illustrator. You can almost feel the connection, as the story and pictures blend together seamlessly.

Other books on this topic:

9. Ahlberg, Janet and Allan. (1988). Starting School. New York: Penguin Books.
10. Birdwell, Norman. (1999). Clifford’s First School Day. New York: Scholastic.
11. Kuklin, Susan. (1990). Going to My Nursery School. New York: Bradbury Press.
12. Kunhardt, Edith. (1992). Red Day, Green Day. New York: Greenwillow Books.
13. Hale, Sara Josepha. (1984). Mary Had a Little Lamb. Illustrated by Tomie de Paola. New York: Holiday House.

14. Stoeke, Janet Morgan. (1996). Minerva Louise at School. New York: Dutton Children's Books.

First School Experiences, including Mixed Feelings about Coming to School

15. Ashley, Bernard. (1995). Cleversticks. Illustrated by Derek Brazell. New York: Random House.

Ling Sung feels bad that other children at his preschool can do things that earn the teacher's praise, like Terry tying his shoes, Anis buttoning his jacket, or Manjit writing her name. Ling Sung feels so bad that he doesn't even want to go to school. Then, one day, he realizes something he can do that his teachers and classmates admire: his ability to use chopsticks. They all want to learn, and he receives much affirmation. Then the other children eagerly share their skills with him, and a natural sharing develops. This story presents a nice model for affirming the special gifts of all children. It also portrays a multicultural classroom, with a wide range of cultures accurately illustrated, while also highlighting the Chinese American child and customs. The classroom is also realistically drawn, so the children will be able to identify many of their familiar centers and activities. This is a rich multicultural book with a universal message.

16. Gantos, Jack. (1998). Back to School for Rotten Ralph. Illustrated by Nicole Rubel. New York: HarperCollins.

Ralph is Sarah's cat. He is jealous of her going to school, so he causes mischief which gets her in trouble at her new school. The children soon discover Ralph and welcome him, as they like having a cat visit school. Sarah and Ralph now have new friends and are content with who are. In a humorous way, this tells the universal story of a younger child feeling displaced when an older sibling goes off to school. It also addresses feelings of embarrassment when children are not successful at school. Created by Gantos and Rubel, Rotten Ralph is a lovable character who appears in eight other story books. If your students relate to Ralph, you may want to try some of his other misadventures.

17. Howlett, Bud. (1993). I'm New Here. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Jazmin's is smiling on the cover photo, but the story begins, "I was so afraid. It was my first day of school in the United States and I didn't speak English." This first person narrative and photo essay describes the first week at school for Jazmin Escalante, who has recently arrived from El Salvador. The retelling of her experiences are filled with realistic detail and rings with authenticity, e.g., being kept busy with coloring, having her name mispronounced, understanding some but not being able to communicate, and going to ESL class.

The author was the former coordinator of bilingual education for San Rafael City Schools, California, and brings his experiences and sensitivity to the book. He has written a very full and

touching story that concludes positively with integration through a cross-cultural friendship. The photograph (on page 31) of two girls, Anglo and Hispanic, holding hands is very powerful.

Because Jazmin is nine and in 4th grade, her adjustment experience and reflections are more difficult than those of most younger children. Plus, there is more text than a beginning language learner can comprehend. However, there are few books that so realistically capture the first school experience for elementary-age immigrants. Therefore, this book fills an important void and can be modified for use with younger children. For example, the color photographs help tell the main points, and the teacher can retell the experiences. In sum, this is a well-written book that can help build sensitivity to newcomers who don't speak English. As a follow-up activity, the class could role play the situation and act out ways they could welcome newcomers to their class.

18. Paek, Min. (1988). Aekyung's Dream. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.

For Aekyung, a young Korean immigrant girl, school is often painful. She doesn't speak much English and the other children tease her. Inspired by a dream about an ancient Korea king, she begins to learn English, express herself and her culture through drawing, and make friends. This dual language book takes her from the awkward first steps of entry to adjustment and confidence, while affirming her cultural identity. The author, herself a Korean immigrant and also a professional artist in both Korea and the United States, has written this book based on her own experiences and from interviews with other newcomers. As she explains, "Aekyung's Dream was written with the hope that it might encourage other immigrant children to persevere in their efforts to adjust to a new culture."

It is likely that the amount of text per page will be a little long for beginning language learners. I would suggest editing it, as needed, to reach the newcomers, as this book so authentically captures the emotions and experiences of immigrants. In other words, don't wait until the new students can reach the language level of the text; instead, adjust the language for them.

19. Poydar, Nancy. (1999). First Day, Hooray. New York: Holiday House.

Written by a former elementary school teacher, the author writes from first hand experience about getting ready for school and the first day jitters of both staff and students. Hearing of the teachers' preparations and anxieties makes students feel more normal about theirs. Depicting school staff in regular activities outside of school is seldom included in children's books, yet very helpful in viewing teachers as community members.

The pictures are realistic yet artistic, and closely match the limited text per illustration. This helps make the story accessible to beginning language learners. Some of the characters have brown skin, but there do not appear to be any Hispanic or Asian characters.

20. Rosenberg, Vera. (1999). Vera's First Day of School. New York: HaperCollins.

Vera is excited about school, eagerly gets ready, and walks to school with her two older sisters. But when her sisters go off to their friends, she feels alone and overwhelmed by the number of children on the playground. When the bells rings, she stays behind and then walks home and hides under her bed. After a while, her mother finds her, and Vera shares her story. Her mother lovingly brings her to her class, where her teacher and other students welcome her. She is soon engaged and happy. The last picture of Vera and seven classmates smiling and dancing around in a circle holding hands is heart-warming. Children will easily relate to her initial jitters and fears, yet feel comforted by her adjustment. Rosenberg's illustrations present a happy, multicultural setting, but do not clearly represent specific ethnic groups.

21. Wells, Rosemary. (1981, 2000). Timothy Goes to School. New York: Dial Books (E.P. Dutton).

It is hard for Timothy to feel successful on the first day of school, especially when the teacher pairs him with "perfect" Claude. Clothing is very important, even at this age, as is social acceptance by peers. Timothy's mom provides reassuring home support, but ultimately it is Timothy himself who finds his own place and makes his own first friend.

The cute animal characters remove this a step from reality, yet the experiences and feelings are very real. Hearing about someone else's struggle with a school adjustment helps young children deal with it themselves. This can lead to a discussion about how it feels to be new. Another follow-up is to develop affirming ways to welcome new students to school, including those with limited English proficiency and from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The 2000 edition has the same text, but with larger pages, more colorful illustrations, and attractive page borders. In sum, the new edition appears more modern, but the story is timeless.

Other Books on this topic:

22. Cohen, Miriam. (1967). Will I Have a Friend? Illustrated by Lillian Hoban. New York: Macmillan.

23. Cooney, Nancy Evans. (1993). Chatterbox Jamie. Illustrated by Marilyn Hafner. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

24. Elliot, Dan. (1982). Grover Goes to School. Illustrated by Normand Chartier. New York: Random House/Children's Television Workshop.

25. Wells, Rosemary. (1995). Edward Unready for School. New York: Dial Books.



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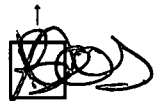
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